Forensic Science | 10.1 Ransom Note Analysis

Background Information

The son of a wealthy computer guru has been kidnapped from his home, and you have been called in to evaluate the ransom note. The house includes a security system that video monitors all activity. Four different people had access to the house on the day of the kidnapping besides the father and mother of the child.

Each of the 4 people are now suspects and have submitted exemplars for comparison to the ransom note. Your job is to collect data to match the handwriting sample and catch the culprit before any harm can come to the missing child.

Your supervisor has instructed you to follow a very specific procedure for this case because it is imperative that you apprehend the correct suspect as soon as possible!

Procedure

1. Download the Exemplars from the suspects and the ransom note attached to the lesson assignment. You may prefer to print a copy so you can write on it and make side by side comparisons.
2. As you make your observations of each handwriting sample, complete the data tab on the next page as you conduct your analysis.
3. Determine which suspect wrote the ransom note.
4. Answer all analysis questions.

Data Collection (8 points)

Observations	Comments				
	Suspect 1	Suspect 2	Suspect 3	Suspect 4	Ransom Note
Is the writing in cursive, print, or combination of	cursive	cursive	combination	cursive	cursive
Are the lines smooth or shaky?	Smooth	smooth	shaky	smooth	smooth
Do capital letters only appear at the beginning of a sentence or name or are there randomly distributed capital letters throughout the text?	Only at the beginning of sentence or name	Only at the beginning of sentence or name	Only at the beginning of sentence or name	Only at the beginning of sentence or name	Only at the beginning of sentence or name
Do the capital letters "connect" to the lower-case letters that follow?	no	no			no
Are any letters left open, such as o's or a's? Which ones?	no	no	no	no	no
Does the pressure applied appear to be consistent or does it vary? (Example… lighter pressure at end of a word.)	consistent	consistent	varied	consistent	consistent
Is there a slant? Which direction, right or left?	Slant to the right	no	Slant to the right	no	Slant to the right
Are there fancy curls or loops? If so, which letters?	Yes o, l, g, b, d	Yes, H	Yes, d, s	no	Yes o, l, g, b, d

Observations	Comments				
	Suspect 1	**Suspect 2**	**Suspect 3**	**Suspect 4**	**Ransom Note**
Are all i's dotted? If so, how? Right, left, center? Are there any notable features like a circle or a	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Are all the t's crossed? If so, how? Right, left, center? Are there any fancy tails or circles?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Conclusion (2 points)
1. Which suspect did you determine wrote the ransom note?

Suspect 1

Analysis (2 points each)
2. Were any of the suspects easily eliminated without having to complete the data table? Which one(s) and specifically why?
   Number 2 because it looked the least like the note
3. Which observations specifically helped you eliminate the remaining suspects?
   Suspect 1 looked exactly like the handwriting on the note
4. Which observations proved to be most beneficial in determining a match to the ransom note?
   Looking at the handwriting of the suspects and eliminating the ones that were too different from the note
5. What did you find most difficult about this case?

   Reading cursive
6. On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being least confident and 10 being most confident), how confident are you in the conclusion you have made? Explain why you feel this way. 10 because suspect one's handwriting looks exactly like the handwriting from the note